OPINION

OCTOBER 1971

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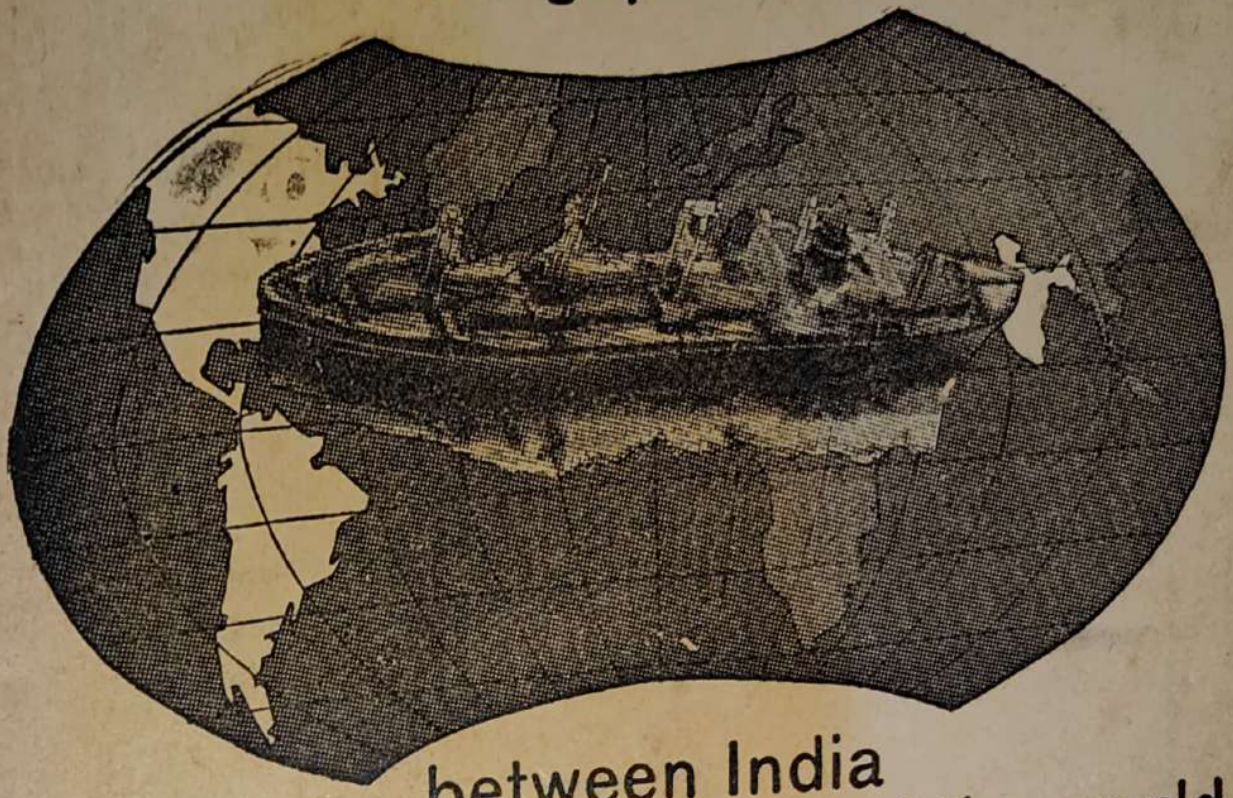

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CONVERSATION

ON a marble bench on the terrace of the Hall of Learning, in which were assembled all the books of any value that had ever been written, sat a venerable personage. In white flowing robes, with a red velvet skull cap on his head and a finely embroidered soft woollen shawl around his shoulders, he looked the embodiment of benevolence and wisdom. "What," said a deep voice from behind him on the left, "A frown on your serene brow, noblest of ministers! I would not have believed it possible. Has something disturbed you?" Looking up Buzrjmehr, Nowshirwan the Just's celebrated Minister, smiled and said, "Nothing escapes your discerning eyes, Master of Statecraft. Disturbed, hardly, but I will not deny some agitation of mind. Come join me, Guruji, and give me the benefit of your views. A matter like this, who can judge better than you, with your highly pragmatic, yet inherently subtle mind? What do you think of these celebrations that are going on in the land of my birth?" The tall, spare, ascetic-looking Kautilya, clad all in white, allowed a smile to appear on his normally serious countenance as he sat down and said, "Ah, that's it; when in the all-revealing cup I sometimes look into, the tented city, the magnificent banquet and all the rest of it appeared, I wondered how you would regard it and was in fact thinking of specially trying to meet you to find out. And now you ask me. Well, since with you one cannot be anything but sincere, I shall answer shortly, 'Children must have their toys, but neither is the standing of a monarch nor the power-position of his country enhanced because he plays with superb toys.' Will this exhibition of wealth lavished on French architects and cooks and Italian waiters impress the Russian, American or British Governments, even the Sheikh of Kuwait or the King of Lesotho? I'm afraid, not. You know the old proverb, Fools make feasts and wise men come and eat. No, I who have been present at not a few shows in my time, must, alas, hold that this affair neither benefits Iran nor does credit to the memory of the mighty Khushru." "Exactly as I thought," exclaimed Buzrjmehr. "I said to myself I knew little of the ramifications of world politics today, in fact I don't keep very much in touch with happenings down below and perhaps I was mistaken and judged too harshly. So I am glad you who keep up your interest in the sphere which was our habitat long ago, confirm my judgment. The Emperor whom I had the very great privilege of serving, when I brought the matter to his notice—he has always been a man of very few words you know—simply looked at me and said, 'Bah!' That is your view, too. One other aspect struck me, the ostentatious vulgarity of it all. We as a nation were always noted for elegance, a sense of proportion, but all one finds here is lavish profusion, utter wastefulness.

"My most noble Emperor's brother's widow, very rich in her own right, once sought audience to beg the great honour of his presence at

her son's marriage feast. He asked her what she was spending on the total celebrations. She mentioned a very large amount. He said, 'If you will have a simple marriage and a family feast costing not more than one-tenth the amount you mention and will distribute the remaining nine-tenth for charitable purposes, I shall be happy to come. If not, it is your wealth, do as you will, but don't expect me.' Full of complaint, the lady privately sought my advice. I said, 'An occasion of happiness for yourself, should that not be made an occasion of happiness for the less fortunate? What better celebration can there be than the giving of help to the deserving and the miserable? Come, let us divide up the nine-tenths, a tenth each for the planting of trees on that very barren road-side that runs for miles on the busy high way past your estate, a tenth for the provision of food for the orphans of ten villages for a year, and so on.' Angrily, she turned on me, crying, 'Your Emperor and you, do you not understand the obligation one owes to one's place in Society? Am I to be sneered at by all the noble ladies? Do you wish me to be known as the Great Miser?' I said, 'I can only repeat His Majesty's words, it is your wealth, do as you will, but don't expect me.' 'Come, minister,' she said, 'don't take that line. Will it not do if I spend only half of what I intended, and distribute the rest for good purposes?' 'Nine-tenth, noble lady,' I said, 'Because you are of the Royal house, from you more is expected than would be from others. You set an example, you fix a standard, madam. Many others will say, the Emperor's sister-in-law did this, so must we.' Her son, who was with her told her she really must give way for would it not be a far greater disgrace if his uncle did not attend his wedding. She did, saying she had known all along His Imperial Majesty was right, but there was no harm in trying to get her own way if she could. I laughed and repeated a verse of the greatest poet of our time,

> 'She knoweth the right, but seeketh the wrong,
> Is not that part of the magic that is woman?'

That was our tradition, how far away from this vulgar display, this exotic hospitality to those in no need of it!"

"And at whose cost, your Grace," said an old, white bearded man, with a rugged weather-beaten face who had been listening, "At that of the people of Iran, of course. One would think every Iranian lived in great comfort, lacked nothing essential, there were no poor and few miserable, and so it didn't matter if large sums were spent on foreigners and futile shows. But that is not the case. The bulk of the ordinary people are far from having all they need and every dinar that is available can be most usefully spent on their betterment. It is true, of course, that what is the people's is the king's. But that can only be in conditions of great emergency as when the country is being invaded, and everything is needed for beating back the enemy. Equally true is it that what is the king's is the people's, so that if the king wastes even his own private wealth, he is depriving the people of it, since it will not be available to them in

times of great natural disaster, such as floods, drought and earthquake. Some of the rulers of our times understood this. Now, from what I see of affairs below, very few do."

"Well spoken, oh King of Poets," said the shrewd Kautilya. "In your time you hesitated not to rebuke the most powerful of monarchs. What a satire would you not have written, had you been in the land of your birth today! An addition to the preface of the Book of Kings, no doubt. What is so shocking to me as a Minister who served under a very powerful self-willed monarch myself, is the unwillingness of the ministers of these times to influence their rulers to avoid wrong courses and follow the right path. You have all seen the great Maurya here, with his lowering brow and the thunder in his voice. It seemed impossible sometimes to get him to change his made-up mind, when for the good of the state that was essential, but more often than not if you submitted the correct position with deference and frankness, you could get him to reconsider. Once he said to me, 'This is the third time you have raised this matter most inconsiderately. Shall I take your head?' The glare in his eyes and the anger in his voice caused me to tremble but I managed to get out 'If gracious Majesty thinks I shall serve him better headless, so be it'. With a growl he turned away. Next day my deputy told me he had passed orders as I had suggested, and that evening at the levee, he gave me one of his very rare smiles." "Even waste may perhaps be tolerated," said Buzrjmehr in a low voice, "but vulgarity, ostentatious vulgarity in high places, is truly appalling. Is there to be no difference in behaviour between the head of state and the nouveau riche speculator or merchant, who wishes to impress by display of possessions and strike wonder by novelties?"

"Let us not be too concerned about this, honoured sir," said Kautilya. "This is not a failing only of the Government of your land. In my country, where now no monarchs but the selected of the representatives of the people govern, the vulgarity and ostentation of the members of the Government is even worse. It is not limited to a single occasion. No, it is continuous. They take for themselves amounts out of all proportion to the condition of the people. They live in an atmosphere of vulgar ostentation. On showy pretentiousness, buildings and projects, they waste large resources that could be much better used for the public good. And on top of it all they are extremely hypocritical. Enjoying the utmost luxury themselves, they preach all the time simplicity and austerity to the people. Surveying the world at the present time, it sometimes seems to me that not only in the field of government but in many other spheres, there is a reversion to what we used to call barbaric excess, a state from which we attempted to raise the people to civilised moderation. Ah, here comes one who probably knows more about it than any of us. Mr. Washington, sir, will you be so good as to join us, and give us the benefit of your views. As the first, and many would say, the best President of the United States, now the most powerful and richest country in the world, you have no doubt kept an eye on conditions below, especially in

your own country and in the world as they affect your country. Would you say that on the whole civilised moderation is giving place to barbaric excess in these times. That is the theme I was just mentioning."

"It gives me great pleasure to see all you gentlemen together. Of course I know you all, so much nobility of character, so much understanding and wisdom is rarely gathered together in one spot, even in our present abode. Let me first talk about the land of my birth," said George Washington, a pleasant-faced, impressive individual, dressed in the colourful eighteenth century costume of an English gentleman. "Barbarism, yes, I am afraid, despite all their inventions, productivity and control over nature and environment, my countrymen of the present time I must regretfully term much more barbarian, much less civilised than my contemporaries and I. You see one important test of barbarism is fear. The barbarian is always afraid. The civilised person looks squarely at what is making him afraid, understands its implications and overcomes his fear. The barbarian keeps on hoping against hope that somehow, by magic, by some other strange means, he will manage to make death pass him by. The civilised person knows death comes to all and cannot be evaded. This in itself gives him courage. You gentlemen may probably not have come across an English song of the last earth-century that puts rather neatly the civilised point of view on death," and in a pleasing baritone he sang,

> What kind of plaint have I
> That perish in July?
> I might have had to die,
> Perchance, in June.

"Now, with that frame of mind, you cannot be afraid of death. Consequently you do not behave barbarously, you do not do ugly things in the attempt to try and get it to keep away from you. We've had in my country some quite undesirable people as Presidents, men I would not have let come anywhere near me, but I doubt if we've ever had any so ignoble as the present one. The fellow is simply eaten up with fear, a true barbarian. When a man's country is engaged in war, honour demands that he try his best to win it. But this essential barbarian tries his hardest to lose it. He goes cap in hand trying to negotiate with people who are helping massively his enemy, the enemy who in fact would never be able to sustain the fight against his country at all if it were not for the aid received. The aid-givers to his enemy are in effect fighting a war against him by proxy, and instead of standing up and teaching them a lesson, he crawls up to them, tail between his legs like a beaten dog, and says, please, please, let us be friends. And note this, very many of his countrymen support him, obvious barbarians, frightened of dying, hoping to escape death somehow or other, refusing to recognise that it is inevitable sooner or later. Why, with the swift monster machines they rush about in, they kill more of their own people every week than are killed in the war, and yet they will not fight with vigour the war and

win. Victims of fear, they prefer defeat and the triumph of their enemies trying to negotiate peace with those whose real desire is to choke them to extinction as quickly as possible. Yes, barbaric excess is certainly overcoming civilised moderation in such a land. I myself was in my time on earth always a man of peace. War for its own sake never appealed to me. But once engaged in war, I fought better than the best of them and I kept on fighting a far stronger enemy until success came. Not being cowardly is being civilised. Again this fellow sides with and supports the utterly inhuman, though he knows very well the crimes and cruelties committed by them. Can there be better proof of barbarity than that? Alas, we could have been civilised and great, we had the capacity for both. But we chose instead, under the guidance of the fearful uncivilised, to be barbarian and mean. And I'm sad to think many parts of the earth almost by osmosis are following our example. Vulgarity, ostentation, fear of death, failure in kindliness and culture, these signs of barbarism are certainly spreading quickly in the world below. You see, sirs, governments, peoples, parties, all attempt to cover up their weaknesses, follies, crimes by talking about the spirit of the times. As if there had ever been a time actuated by any special spirit, activated by good or evil. Wickedness comes not from the spirit of the time, it comes from the people of the time, more especially from the governors and leaders of the people, who influence and control them."

"It would seem from your lucid and convincing exposition, sir," said the eloquent Firdausi, "that in the perennial war between good and evil of the Zardushtis, which I personally find quite understandable, evil is winning?" "Only temporarily, let us hope, only temporarily," said Washington, "but tell me about these Zardushtis. I do not seem to have heard about them." "You could not have a greater authority on them than his Grace here, the Noblest of Ministers, one of them himself. His unique Emperor and almost all the monarchs I sang about also belonged to the same faith. In my time I got tired of hearing them miscalled fire-worshippers and so I wrote

> Do not say that they were fire-worshippers
> But say rather that they were true worshippers of the one pure God.

But His Grace. . . ." "Friend, does it matter here who sought salvation how down below," said Buzrjmehr, smiling. "Are we not all kindly neighbours here, living at peace in contemplation and amiable discourse?"

"Aye, one and all," said a sharp-featured, shortish man with a Tartar style head, "Which I must confess I find very discouraging. How can the dialectic flourish, when argument is always to arrive at the truth, never for the purpose of confuting, when also you can never abuse your opponent. For a time, I felt very melancholy. But now I have found a remedy. When in the mood for some fun, I go across to the Tavern and needle Stalin, who is generally there with Beria. He tries always to justify himself, which of course, is impossible to do. And a short while ago, in addition to these two, I found Khrushchev there too. It was as

good as the trio in the opera, all singing against one another." "I take it, sir, from what you've been saying that you are the dread Lenin, founder of the Communist state, and establisher in ever-unfortunate Mother Russia of the dictatorship of the proleteriat," said Kautilya. "Yes, yes, I am Lenin. But let me set the record straight. Nobody dreaded me. I was a very pleasant fellow, and though of course I was all for terror in my own interest, I terrified personally none of those many I made my men get rid of. Also there was and is very little Communism in my Communist state, and though there was and is plenty of dictatorship, the proleteriat have no part in it at all." "But then, Sir, tell us all about the 'New Man' you and your party were going to create, the man who would work solely for the public good, who would take only according to his need and give always according to his ability, because of whom the state and all its regulatory agencies would wither away? Is he there now, do you know?" asked Kautilya.

Lenin looked grim, then said, "A myth, a total myth, something to attract the groundlings. Without the carrot and the stick the human animal just does not move, ninety-nine per cent of the species at least. But you know what we Communists are, dogma-ridden. Facts make no difference to us, save practically. They may show the dogma to be entirely false, but it's our dogma, isn't it? So we'll go on repeating it and we'll also go on preaching it to others. The New Man, the old humbug, rather." "Your candour does you great credit, Sir. But tell me one thing more," said Kautilya, "Is Communism something really new, something original?" "Well, I suppose in a way it is," said Lenin, "What Marx and Engels called Communism was certainly very new, but not at all practical. They gave us all those beautiful phrases, workers of the world unite, the need and ability formula you mentioned before, surplus value, progressive, reactionary, etc. The governmental system I worked out was really Peter the Great + Catherine + Fredrick the Great + Napoleon raised to the hundred. The basis was the same old tyranny, rule of one man but a rule pervading every sphere of human thought and human activity. The individual was wholly the State's. He could not eat, drink, move, love, worship, think, write, work, make music, poetry, pictures, except as the state directed. He could own nothing and earn nothing at his own sweet will. He became the serf of the Asars again, even worse, except that he was now addressed as 'comrade' and declared to be the basis of all authority. And the poor fool lapped up this totalitarian tyranny readily enough and under Stalin for instance was murdered by the million. Those who remained still continued to work on, goaded by bayonets, and fight the Germans, goaded by patriotism. A fine life we gave ourselves at the top. We talked in lofty terms too and to a certain extent modernised the country, making it a real great power. The conspiratorial apparatus I incorporated into the state, my spy system and the inability of our opponents to believe, in their search for a peaceful, relaxing world, that we really would do what we said we would do, made us very strong, and now even the Americans tremble at our

strength. If you ask me, are the people happier because of us, I say no, of course not. If you ask me, is Russia a mightier power than at any time in the past because of us, I say yes, very much so. Russia makes the world shiver today and you, Ministers of Chandragupta and Nowshirwan, who did the same in their days, ought to find no difficulty in understanding us."

"With due deference, Comrade Lenin, I think you like to be called that," said Buzrjmehr, "My emperor never forgot his subjects were human beings. He recognised all their rights, and helped them to lead happy lives. He ruled by laws that bound himself just as much as them. He was an autocrat, but a benevolent one, no cruel tyrant." "I think I can say that, though perhaps not so firmly, for Chandragupta too," said Kautilya. "Invariably ruthless in war, he never knowingly treated his people cruelly, nor would he let any of his servants do so." "Well," said Lenin, "I won't challenge your views. But see where your countries are now, and where mine. We do not have to impress foreign powers by artificial feasts and tented cities. We don't have to keep on talking of non-alignment after entering into a treaty which almost hands the country over to the ally. We have the hydrogen bomb, the intercontinental ballistic missile, and nuclear submarines galore. The world shakes at our tread. We don't go to see Nixon; Nixon comes cap in hand to us. I read a lot of English poetry at one time and amending some well-known verses, I say

> Force rules the court, the camp, the grove
> And Earth below and Heaven above.

Look at China. Inconvenient for us at the moment, but consider how far it has got. Again you see Nixon rushing to them."

"You, sir, if I may be permitted to say so," said Firdausi, lord of poesy, "are an unmitigated scoundrel, a true disciple of the Devil. You have no idea at all of, or regard for, simple human values. Powerful you are, you say. You have this and that and the other. And where has it got you? To Death and Limbo, like the smallest peasant you murdered. Remember:

> He who wishes that even an ant should be oppressed,
> Evil and stony-hearted is he.

If there is anything in the Indian theory of incarnation, and after millenia here, we go back, you will surely be a sore-afflicted, scabrous, filth-eating pye dog." "Come, come," said Lenin, "don't be so venomous. I have my other side too. Do you know what I like doing best? Sitting on the green sward by the side of a small stream and listening to music, not the great composers, no, but Chopin and Vivaldi and Scarlatti and such others. We Communists are of course atheists, but clearly we are wrong in holding there is no life after death, for here we are all of us, living though differently. Yes I too have a soul like the rest of you and it is not all bad you know, not all bad. So keep your pye dog to yourself."

"God's mercy will be with you too, friend Lenin, for as our sage Kautilya once said 'The river of God's grace never dries up. It is never frozen. No tiger nears its brink.' Think that over and drink from it for your soul's salvation." So said the clean of heart, the servant of man, Buzrjmehr. Rising, he bowed to them all and going down the steps to the lawn, walked on, lost in meditation.

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THE POEMS ON GOING AWAY

1. *After many days, again, the fields.*
Not, as I remember, fallow, barren
and dry, awaiting rain
beneath listlessly conferring crows,
but paddy-swollen, strewn
with silver water, kite-flying, river grown
where lazy kingfishers brood upon
their reflections across fishbacks;
and recognise the old friends (a lost flock
in a jungle of sparrows):
drongo, barbet, bulbul, wagtail, tern.
And through these green fields I came
home to my sister, waiting,
who says, so there you are.

2. *Et tu . . .*
It is to be lauded, the treachery
that makes, martyrs, saints and saviors.
It is the negative grace we must accept
even await; but what
of the betrayals that merely rob
you of an illusion, of peace, of bread, of friends?
Its pettiness the exact sum of your ventures,
failings, triumphs, small and sufficient.
Its venom enough to blacken
not kill
taint, not end.
You, not a god to contain it,
slowly colapse.

3. *A woman alone,*
walking a busy street
at peak hour would generally meet
indifferent jostling, routine leers.
But if she holds
within her loosely closed
fist the memory of not-alone
and quietly laughs
within herself, she will meet
nothing and men melt
into unreal, irrelevant
stuff at her approach.

—Gauri Deshpande

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THE RIGHT TO DIE

FREDOON P. ANTIA

SHAKUNTALA PARANJPYE and you have done a distinct service, not only to the readers of *Opinion*, but also to society generally—she by writing the article "Dying" and you by publishing it, in your issue of August 31. It is essential that the question of the right to live and to die should frankly, openly and without reservations be discussed, and society's attitude correctly defined towards these vital issues which make such a difference to the well-being or otherwise of so many of its members.

The subject is unfortunately heavily overladen with vague slogans and sickly sentiment. What is required is a rational approach which takes into consideration, first and foremost, the welfare of the individual concerned as long as it does not conflict with that of the society. The test of whether a person should live or die should be whether that person himself or herself wishes to live or to die. If the community cannot make life reasonably worth living for that person, it has no right to demand that he should go on living. It follows that it has no right to prescribe punishment for the person who wishes to end his or her own life. If this rational test is applied, any provision in the penal code which prescribes punishment for attempted suicide is irrational and needs to be amended.

But this is not enough. As Shakuntala Paranjpye has said "when one goes to a show and finds it supremely dull, one walks away". There are many to whom the show of life is not just dull. It is positively painful. Life is a burden which they are compelled to carry against their will. Our physicians one and all of whom have to abide by their Hippocratic oath are required to lengthen life as much as possible—to the bitterest end, regardless of the consequences of such life-prolonging treatment on the sense of well-being of their patients. Loyalty to their oath demands that they can do nothing else. But does not reason dictate that this oath be changed, both in letter and in spirit? To forestall against misuse of such a licence given to the physician to end life in certain cases, adequate safeguards may be provided by law so that life may not be taken where not indicated on merits, or with criminal intent, or with a view to serve the ulterior purpose of somebody who would profit from the death of another. But the right to demand death in certain circumstances cannot rationally be denied.

Whether as a result of the "civilised" life we lead, or arising out of other reasons, the list of incurable diseases which afflict, sometimes even the young and the middle aged, goes on increasing. If one is afflicted by such a disease beyond the age of "three score years and ten", the chances of recovery are acceptably nil. In such and similar circumstances is there any sense in prolonging life by taking extreme medical measures? If the patient is in his senses, he should have the right to demand that

he should be put to death. If the patient is unconscious, his near and dear ones should have the right to make such a demand on his behalf. The physician or the committee of physicians who comply with that demand are then acting in the best interests of the patient, as they are supposed to do. Keeping merely the flame of life burning when ill health, pain and suffering cannot be relieved, and indeed go on intensifying, ill serves the objective which the physician should have in view.

In a recently reported case in Florida, USA, the patient—a lady of 72—had to be subjected to frequent repetitions of surgical incisions into her withered veins so that almost continual blood transfusions could be forced in. She begged her physician not to torture her any more. The physician, presumably an extra cautious person, took the issue to court lest he might be involved in aiding or abetting a suicide or alternatively be accused of treating a patient against her will. The judge ruled "a person has a right not to suffer pain. A person has the right to live or die in dignity". The patient according to the judge "could not be forced to accept any treatment that was painful". The transfusions were thereupon stopped. The next day the lady was freed from her suffering. She died.

In this case the patient was conscious enough to ask that she should be relieved from her suffering. What happens if the patient goes into a coma over a prolonged period? Cases are not unknown to medical history where a human being is reduced to the state of a vegetable—nevertheless goes on living. Nothing functions normally, except the heart. In one case this writer has heard of such a position continuing for 13 years! Imagine the agony to the near ones in full knowledge of the fact that recovery, or even regaining of consciousness, is impossible. Imagine the physical inconvenience in such a case to a middle class or working class family living in a poky flat in one of our metropolitan cities in India!

This can happen to any of us. Should not any ordinary citizen have the right to demand that in case he falls ill with an incurable malady, from which there are no reasonable chances of recovery, no extraordinary or heroic measures should be adopted merely to keep life going? In other words he should be allowed to die in dignity without being tortured by medical treatment.

According to a recent report two groups, (1) The Euthanasia Educational Fund and (2) The Euthanasia Society of America, are spreading the message of the right to die with dignity—the right to die a "good death". A bill is reported to be before the Florida Legislature purporting to give a patient suffering from an incurable or painful or fatal disease, the right to ask that his life should be ended quickly.

In India where life is becoming a burden to an increasingly large number of people, not only because of reasons of health, but also because of complete absence of social security, it seems to be even more than ever necessary to give the individual the right to decide, in Shakuntala Paranjpye's words "when to quit the show". To failing health reasons,

are added economic distress. Many who have given the best years of their lives by way of honest work and even service to the community have been ground during the last 25 years between the two mill stones of savage taxation and a savage level of prices. When they are compelled to retire—not because of any reason other than their age, they are reduced to abject poverty. Even if not afflicted by a disease, they should have the right to decide if they wish to drag on a miserable dull poverty-stricken existence in squalor, or to quit the stage. If they decide to quit they should be provided with appropriate ways and means to achieve that objective.

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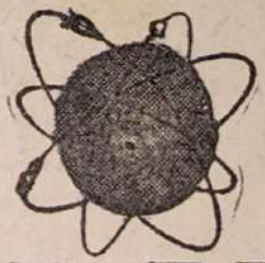

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NIGHT

It is night alone helps
to achieve a lucid exclusiveness:
Time that had dimmed

her singular form
by its harsh light now makes
recognition possible

through this opaque lens.
Touch brings the body into focus,
restores colour to inert hands

till the skin takes over
erasing angularities, and the four walls
turn on a strand of hair.

THE TRUMPET SUN

Ears of earth
are never deaf to the spiked song
of the trumpet sun.
Time
with wind and wave
for fingers
plays on four stops of seasons.
Plays
loudest in summer
after the low whistle of spring.
And the long ovation of leaves falling
leaves the trumpet sun
mute
in the snow.

—R. Parthasarathy

THE PEOPLE AND THEIR STATE

K. K. SINHA

THE State is the public authority set up by the people. It is meant to serve the people. It is not meant to be used for partisan ends. The foundations of the State are weakened if it is utilised for party ends.

Today the State apparatus in West Bengal is weak because for a long time it has been used for party interests and that also unscrupulously. This is an old story. Those who were in power before 1967 used the State apparatus recklessly for party ends. This has been the practice for more than 15 years. The result was that the party became thoroughly unpopular and the State apparatus was demoralised.

When other parties came to power in 1967, they did not stop this practice. For they thought State machinery should be utilised for revolutionary purposes. They simply did not believe in the neutrality of the State as between parties. Their object being bringing about of revolution, one of their policies was to weaken the State. This they did both from outside and inside.

The Governor is now trying to enable the State to recover its original purpose and discharge its responsibilities without fear or favour.

The public fully and whole-heartedly supports his efforts. His latest step in promoting a sense of discipline within the State apparatus is most welcome.

At the same time the public expects that he assure himself that the State does not give any encouragement to those partisan elements in public life who are today on the right side of power. This is not an academic question. For the reports of what happened in Cossipore earlier and elsewhere suggest that such practices are not hypothetical.

The State apparatus does not act uprightly and fearlessly because those officers who have done so have been taken to task instead of being encouraged. Will the Governor tell the officers that their work will be appreciated only if they act justly and fairly with promptness and without fear or hesitation, and that they will be given exemplary punishment if they do not so act. Perhaps some concrete steps taken in this direction might drive the lesson home.

Many in the officers rank, both in the districts and at State level, are dragging their feet, for the obvious reason that the future is still hazy. This is moral cowardice and such officers are not fit to be "public servants". They exist to serve the public and not the parties, and if they hesitate today, they should be severely warned. If even after this they do not play straight, they should be asked to go.

The State belongs to the people. The people are its master. The people therefore should assert themselves and tell the officers and others that they will not tolerate a partisan or hesitant attitude in the discharge of their public duty. Only then will the hands of the Governor be strengthened.

FOLK TALES FROM BANDRA

I

CATHOLIC MOTHER

Francis X. D'Souza
is father of the year.
Here he is top left
the one who's smiling.
By the grace of god, he says,
we've had seven children
(in seven years)
We're One Big Happy Family
God Always Provides
India Will Suffer for
her Wicked Ways
(these Hindu buggers got no ethics)

Pillar of the Church
says the parish priest
Lovely Catholic Family
says Mother Superior

the pillar's wife
says nothing.

II

VIEWPOINT

So what
if John hasn't worked
for two years
and Bella's husband
comes home drunk
every night
You can't trust
Non-Catholic fellows.

III

SWEET SIXTEEN

Well, you can't say
they didn't try.
Mamas never mentioned menses.

Sister screamed you vulgar girl
don't say brassieres say
bracelets and pinned paper
Sleeves onto our sleeveless dresses.
The retreat preacher thundered
Never go with a man alone
Never Alone *and even if you're*
engaged only passionless kisses.

So at sixteen, Phoebe asked me
confidentially: can it happen
when you're in a dance hall
with a man, I mean, you know what,
getting preggers *and all that,*
when *you're dancing*
I, sixteen, assured her darkly you could.

IV

BANDRA

Hubby emerges from coal bin
bottles under arm
face a smirk.
Hot stuff, he says.
The gathered goans giggle
dirty jokes:
hot stuff and sex
Fred the comic slaps hubby
on back
now the party'll go men go
says Fred
goans agaggle
Fred laughing loudest
(he's the big thing
this side of Hill Rd.)
What personality says Dominic
such pink lips men and
look at that chest
so comic says Mabel
so comic says Hetty
Fred is the life of the party.
Come on men Fred give us
a song calls Mabel
what personality says Dominic
such pink lips and look
at that chest.

—Eunice de Souza

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ABROAD

THERE'S little doubt that in the end Taiwan will be thrown out of the United Nations. Communist China will insist, and the U.S. Government saying no, no, do understand, we can't, we've promised, no, oh no, will end up by saying yes, or at least, we tried our best, but there you are, you see so many have turned against that it's no use our holding out. Shortly thereafter, the U.S. fleet that keeps the Communist Chinese from attacking Taiwan will become occupied elsewhere and the Taiwan Government will be compelled to come to terms, accepting Communist China's sovereignty and its Communist system, or will be overthrown by force of arms. Apart from the betrayed Taiwanese, there will be one other casualty, U.S. honour. Since however President Nixon very obviously shares Falstaff's view of honour ("What is honour? A word. What is that word, honour? Air. . . . Therefore I'll none of it: honour is a mere scutcheon.") there will be little grief in U.S. governmental circles over this particular casualty. And among the people of the U.S.? Almost as little, for they are a great pragmatic people, and what's the good of shedding tears over spilt milk, or the spilt blood of a million or two Taiwanese, whom their Government had promised to protect, but couldn't, because it had to gain favour with a powerful foe, nuclear-armed and making splendid progress in nuclear prowess. Moral: Put not your trust in powerful Princes, powerful Presidents, powerful Governments, nor even in the people of powerful Countries. Not only is there no salvation in them; there is not even ordinary simple good faith in them. They will value you at less than a mess of pottage and sell you down the river, whenever they hold the sale will serve their purpose.

* * * *

From small Belgium comes the disclosure about forty-three Soviet spies, carrying on nefarious activities. Very skilful must have been their operations, for they were tapping the telephone-calls of even so security-conscious an organisation as NATO headquarters in Brussels. Quite a number of Belgians and other NATO country nationals must have been working with them. Why? A few because of being convinced Communists, more because of payment, the majority because of being blackmailed by the KGB about some unsavoury or criminal incidents in their past, which they would be very unwilling to have disclosed for fear of what might follow, punishment, disgrace, odium. The KGB go very far indeed to establish their hold on foreigners who they are sure will be very useful. They have a School for Seduction in the Soviet Union, it is said, at which Special Intelligence Agents are given a course of lectures and practical demonstrations by an instructor who shows the class how to make love to seven consecutive women without even staggering. He teaches mind-control. It is useful too when a student is ordered to make

love to a beautiful woman—mustn't enjoy it, might become involved—or to some old bag of lard—no flinching allowed. So the students graduate and come into the big, simple-minded world with a diploma in how to *make* a woman and influence people. The theory is, Seduce some women thoroughly and you've got them; they'll do anything in return; and in practice, it has often worked, they say.

* * * *

The Soviet Premier, Kosygin, is visiting Canada. The Canadian Government is laying out its reddest carpet for him. It is also trying hard to impress him, a technical expert, with Canadian industrial expertise and achievement, by seeing to it that he visits as many Canadian factories as possible. At present, the U.S. is their principal customer, but in view of the recent American attitude to foreign trade, they wish to diversify, and think Russia may help. There can be no objection to that, but Mr. Trudeau and his Ministers had better peruse again the Royal Commission's report on the Gouzenko affair, in which two judges of the Canadian High Court had dealt at length with the subversive activities of Soviet officials in Canada and the way in which Canadians were suborned into working against their country. Let them not make the mistake of regarding it as out-of-date. It is very much of our time, as the recent British and Belgian disclosure about spying show. "The Communists are much more

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clever than the Nazis. Hitler's patience was too easily exhausted. He wanted everything all at once, a thousand years Reich in ten years ! But the Communists think of politics as the art of the impossible ; just take everything in small slices, little by little." And who can say as he looks at the world that this strategy has not been eminently successful ?

* * * *

Dean Acheson who died recently was undoubtedly America's last great Secretary of State. None of those who followed him merit comparison with him, though Rusk (who also has Dean for his first name) came near to him in his gentlemanliness, considerate approach to people and problems and flair for appropriate understatement. It is one of the ironies of history that his greatest achievement should be called the Marshall and not the Acheson plan. He had the idea, spoke about it, worked on it and persuaded Marshall to adopt it and put it to the Europeans and his own countrymen. Whatever some Europeans may say now, there can be no doubt that through it, he planted the seeds of the later prosperity of not only defeated Germany but of all the war-ravaged victorious European countries, including Great Britain. As soon as they understood what a far-reaching, effective and helpful project it was—it took them some days to do it—European statesmen, not least Ernest Bevin, hailed it with delight. Acheson offered to apply it to the Soviet Union too, but Stalin would have nothing to do with it. Acheson, like Churchill, realised in good time, the aggressive policy the Soviet Union had decided on within a year of the end of the Second World War. That it was defeated in Iran, in Greece and in Western Europe was largely due to him and President Truman whose doctrine made the Soviet leader realise that the U.S. was awake, watching and would not hesitate to act. After the first Communist take-over of Czechoslovakia, he saw no alternative to the creation of NATO, and determinedly worked for it. A fine-looking man, a witty and eloquent speaker, an admirable head of a great department, a statesman of courage and foresight, as strong an opponent of Witch-hunter McCarthy as of Dictator Stalin, he served well not only his country but the world. Rightly may we say to him, 'Well done thou good and faithful servant ! Always with thee be Peace !'

* * * *

"Done what ? Who ? To whom ?" would be fitting title for the great Communist China Mystery. Is Lin Piao dead, incapacitated, alive, well ? Was it Mao himself whom the Ethiopian Emperor saw or a double, Mao having died and the fact of his death having been concealed ? Where is Liushaochi ? Was he in the plane that crashed in Mongolia or is he enjoying Russian hospitality in a Black Sea coast resort ? And Huang, Mao's special personal aide, high in the hierarchy, why has his name disappeared from the party documents where it was always prominent before ? Why was the great National Day parade cancelled when the preparations for it had been going on for quite some time ? Has power

really passed into the hands of Chou-En-lai and is he running the country? Sinologists may pretend to know what most people in Communist China would admit ignorance about. What a government! A mediaeval secrecy enshrouding everything and hydrogen bombs rolling off the production line, a polished Chou telling American journalists what's wrong with their country and how their President should behave if he wants to be on good terms with China, Nixon's envoy Kissinger arriving to be told Taiwan Out, bowing low and saying, "Yes, Sir, of course, Sir, but just give us some time. And please let the President come and be very cordial to him, you know he has an election to win and if you make him the Apostle of Peace, it will have a great effect on the electorate. So be good to him and you may be sure he'll be very good to you. Taiwan is in any case out-of-date. What can it do for him?"

Whatever be the mystery of the faction-fights at the top, there certainly is a government functioning. For outsiders that is the thing to remember. Should it be allowed into the United Nations? So unfruitful has the United Nations been in the last few years, that it would almost seem it could not get worse, let in who you will. Should it be allowed into the Security Council? Russia's already there, so why not China, some would argue. If the two are at cross-purposes, so much the better for the saner elements, and if they get together, well nobody really bothers about U.N. decisions anyhow. Israel, Rhodesia, South Africa, none of them care a brass button for what they contemptuously call that talking-shop. From India's and Bangla Desh's point of view, Communist China in the U.N. means an accession of strength to Pakistan, but the very high-principled Government of India doesn't let that deter it from warmly welcoming China in and demanding Taiwan out. What, think of national interests, perish the thought, has been for so long the Government of India's attitude that it has become almost ingrained in its thinking.

A CLOUD THAT'S DRAGONISH

SANKAR N. MAITRA

THE Indo-Soviet treaty has barely run two months out of its twenty years course. But even at the start it is being rightly criticised for having failed in its prime purpose, from the Indian point of view, of helping to solve the Bangla Desh problem. Instead of letting India go forward, the treaty seems to act as a brake. In the recent Soviet-Algerian joint communique India has again been equated with Pakistan and the hope has been expressed that problems between the two countries should be settled in the spirit of Tashkent. No wonder voices have been raised in this country for the abrogation of the Indo-Soviet treaty.

But perhaps it is not wise to jump so quickly from the spring of hope to the winter of despair. It may be worth our while to examine and find out directions in which the Indo-Soviet treaty could be made to serve India's true interests. When the Treaty was signed many people heaved a sigh of relief thinking that it would stop China coming to the aid of Pakistan, if the latter chose to fight India over the Bangla Desh issue. But irrespective of the Pakistan angle, it cannot be denied that the treaty is some insurance against China. If the Indo-Soviet treaty has failed us in dealing with Pakistan, we could try to utilise it in negotiating with our other unfriendly neighbour China.

To Indians Pakistan is a reality—many citizens of India today were born in Pakistan yesterday—while China is an abstraction. Unlike most countries in South East Asia we hardly have Chinese living in this country. But China is just round the corner; not only in the Tibet region, but across the Bengal Bay. The cities of Penang and Singapore are largely Chinese in character and population. In Malaya the Chinese population is 40 per cent. In Thailand it is 16 per cent. The HUA CHIAO or overseas Chinese are very much in evidence throughout South-East Asia which they call Nanyang or the southern ocean.

But here is a paradox. Geographically so close, historically and in every way India and China throughout the ages have been strangers. China proper bounded by the desert and the Pacific, and India enclosed between the Himalayas and the Indian ocean, remained isolated from each other. The Badshahs of Delhi had no truck with the Celestial Emperors at Peking. The cultural contacts by Buddhist scholars belong to antiquity, and they ceased with the T'ang dynasty in the tenth century—about a thousand years ago. So wheras Pakistan's interest in India is primary, China's interest in India is peripheral. The current enmity between India and China is all too recent and is not deep-rooted. In some ways it is as phoney as the Hindi-Chini-Bhai-Bhai of the nineteen-fifties. To India, China is a fact of geography and a fact of life which we can ignore only at our peril by burying our collective head ostrich-fashion in the

sands of the MacMahon treaty. If China was not our enemy in the past why should we now think of her as our enemy for all time to come?

Like bird watching, China watching is a fascinating pastime. The main seat of China watchers is the rock of Hong Kong. They come out with fascinating inside stories of what is happening in China or what the Chinese are going to do. But alas, their predictions often turn out to be utterly wrong. Very recently an unusual event has happened—the Sphinx has spoken on the 5th October. The Chinese Premier Mr. Chou-En-lai spoke for two hours and gave a *tour-de-horizon* before an assemblage of sixty Americans. Naturally Chou-En-lai spoke about the Sino-American thaw and how Chairman Mao had set the ping-pong ball bouncing. But quite clearly his talk was meant for nations other than America. In the lengthy Reuter report there was as much about Russia in the talks as about America. The Chinese Premier gave details of Russian armed strength, which according to him was encircling China. The main theme of his speech was that though prepared for war China was ready for peace. He described how since 1969 status quo had been maintained and negotiations were proceeding with Russia. Although Mr. Chou-En-lai characterised the old Sino-Russian treaties as unequal, he affirmed that China was prepared to accept them as basis for negotiation. He went on to say "Where can you find territorial claims by us? We are actually accepting these unequal treaties".

One need not jump to the conclusion that China will take up an identical attitude towards India, but there is no harm in agreeing that the Chinese Premier's view shows a reasonable frame of mind. And significantly while giving the Chinese view on world affairs, Mr. Chou-En-lai apparently did not mention so many topics he might well have such as Chinese help to countries of East Africa, the situation in Latin America or East Europe. He mentioned only four countries by name in the hypothetical context of a joint attack on China. They were U.S.A., U.S.S.R., Japan and India. He asked "Suppose the Soviet army goes straight to the banks of the Yellow River, the Americans go to the southern banks of the Yangtze river, Japan invades and occupies Tsing Tao to Shanghai and India goes in and invades Tibet". A man as astute as Mr. Chou-En-lai would not mention these countries at random. That Russia and America are of consequence to China need not be emphasised, but that Japan and India are mentioned in the same breath does indicate that these two countries also have their importance in Chinese eyes. There is no direct mention of any desire on the part of China to open talks with India, but there are oblique references in the speech which are significant. Holding forth on Chinese ever-willingness to negotiate Chou-En-lai quoted the examples of negotiations for ten years with Chiang-Kai-shek—whom he described as an arch enemy—and now with Korea and Russia.

Obviously one should not jump to the hasty conclusion that the curtain is about to rise on Act II of the play Hindi-Chini-Bhai-Bhai, but clearly the Chinese Prime Minister meant that serious notice should be

taken of his talk by all concerned. It may be more profitable to do so than analysing the Mona-lisa smile of Chinese leaders at Peking parties.

One word of caution. It was bad enough to sell the Tibetan passes but at least we had some legal rights there—to station troops etc. But we have none in Taiwan. In her anxiety to please China, India should not make the mistake of appearing to give away Taiwan, by agreeing to the Peking thesis of one China that will only make the empty gesture laughable both in Peking and Taiwan. Taiwan has been politically separate from mainland China since 1895, and has no intention of changing her present independent status. As the editorial in a Delhi paper pointed out the other day, if our government holds that off-shore islands should belong to the mainland, it should first lay claim to Ceylon. Logically India's aim should be not to extend the territorial claim of the Peoples Republic of China but to limit it within reason. That will be a long process, but a cautious start may be made now. In the darkening Indian sky one should look for a cloud that is dragonish.

VIEWS

Rajendra K. Aneja : A few weeks ago the people of this city poured out to honour the victors of the cricket match against England. Newspapers splashed the victory news on the front pages, the Government of one of the states declared a half-holiday to enable the employees to hear the commentary, schools in Bombay declared a recess to enable the students to cheer the conquerers, heaps and heaps of flowers were rained down on the heroes as the special motorcade sped through the streets of this city, banners at street corners welcomed them. And multitudes of crowds, including housewives, poured out to applaud the heroes. After all we had beaten England in one test-match ! ! The fact that we could have lost the other two, had it not been for the rain, did not dampen the ardour and zeal of the young and old cheerers.

I am not belittling the performance of our men abroad. In fact I say, all praise to them. The fact that a single test victory sent the crowds cheering with glee, while more vital social and economic issues are being totally neglected, only shows the involvement of our people with trivial and peripheral issues. And it is this ebullient reaction exhibited by our people that creates doubts about the intellectual and mental levels of our people. A cynical friend of mine remarked that had any Indian won the Nobel Prize, it would have been difficult to fill a theatre, if a meeting were called to honour him. Even if this statement is considered an exaggeration, one is constrained to admit that recognition of intellectual worth comes very slowly in India.

One can hardly blame our crowds for becoming ebullient about winning a test-match. The preoccupation with trivial matters, is a habit which our national leaders have insidiously inculcated among our people. There has been an inordinate amount of breast-beating over the minor sum of Rs. 5.5 crores distributed to the Princes annually, but nobody is bothered about the monolithic losses being incurred by the public sector concerns, there has been an uproar about the privileges of the ICS but nobody is bothered about the massive growth in population annually. There is a passive indifference about the declining rate of industrial growth, about the parallel black money economy in the nation, about the soaring prices and inflation . . . and nobody knows what the Planning Commission has been doing ever since it was dissolved and devalued. In fact the inordinate preoccupation with peripheral issues has served to divert the attention of our people from the urgent and serious problems that beset our nation. And this is a process which pays rich dividends to the power-crazy politicians, who find security and safety in the ignorance of the people. People who do not question, who do not examine, who do not criticise . . . and who can be fed on speeches and

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*This survey was conducted by the Department of Economics, Sardar Patel University, Vallabh Vidyanagar. The computed income included remittances from relatives in Africa.

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slogans . . . these are very great liabilities to a democracy and very great assets to a politician.

Mass illiteracy cuts the people off from any intellectual literature or ideas, and the general refusal of the average citizen to participate in any activity involving the community or society also isolates him from any process that seeks to evaluate and examine social and political problems. Above all the national leadership supplies the fodder to keep our masses mentally impotent. These are the major factors that are contributing to making this land an intellectually bankrupt nation. How else can one account for the fact that while a test match sends our crowds roaring on the roads, the fact that floods are making a mockery of human life and property in many states, and that human beings are dying a death worse than that of animals on our eastern borders under the yoke of tyranny, disease and human callousness, does not move us at all ?

The intellectual's function is basically to act as an agent of social and economic change. He criticises, guides, comments and advices. The most frustrated man in this country (next to the honest man) is the intellectual, the thinker. Independent thinking is murdered at the root level in our society, in our universities, where the only way to secure good marks is to "mug" or to "copy", even without understanding the subject matter. One can imagine the quality of our young men who will be faced with the responsibility of running the political and industrial machinery ten years from today. The intellectual in our society if he has anything to say that does not please the authorities must starve. And that compels him to shut his mouth and let his thinking rust. The majority agree to prostitute their minds and intellects. A few fight. They are our only hope.

* * * *

N. Lalitkumar : It would be a revelation to most of your readers to know that at the beginning of this century and earlier a 'dastardly' foreign, Imperialist Power, that tyrannised over this country, had one of the most economical postal systems, in which a post-card could be obtained at one-sixty-fourth of a rupee and an envelope at one-thirty-secondth.

Later, things became costlier. Yet for quite a number of years one could get a post-card for less than half-an-anna and an envelope for one-sixteenth of a rupee. With a popular government—our own chosen—these articles, along with many others, became dearer and dearer, so much so that today we have to pay a rupee for five envelopes and one-tenth of a rupee for a post-card. Indeed, we have progressed a good deal in socialising our country and its people.

Among postal articles, the post-card and the inland-letter are the poor man's essential need ; and a 'benign' government has made it difficult

for him to keep contact with his fellows and relations. As if this is not enough burden to the average person, the government has thought it fit to charge five paise for a money-order form, the latest avatar of which is so very shabby that one is unable to read what has been printed, with the printer's ink showing through.

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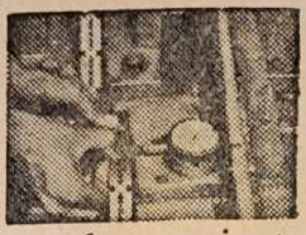

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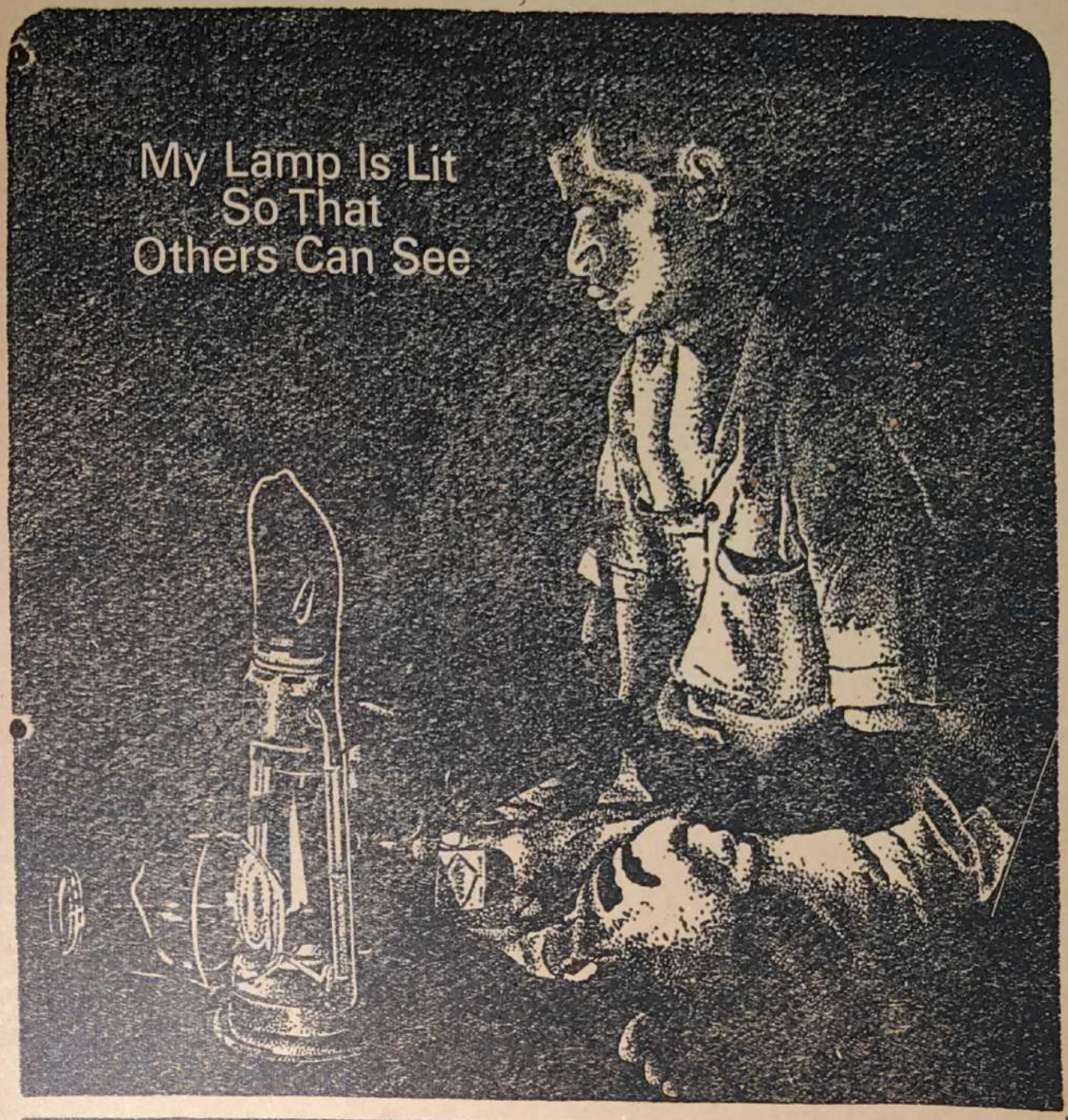

At eventide on a lonely road, returning after a hard day's work, a blind man met a stranger who laughingly asked: "Does a blind man need light?" "Yes," replied the blind man, "my lamp is lit so that others can see."

On the palm fringed shores of Phansa, near Daman, Tatas have donated a 240 acre farm. Here, the blind are trained as farmers and tradesmen, resettled on their own farms or in co-operative endeavours.

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OPINION

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Posted at Central Paper Sorting Office, Bombay on 27-10-71
Regd. No. MH 580
Licence No. 141. Licensed to post without pre-payment

Edited and published by A. D. Gorwala at "Purnima", Ridge Road, Bombay-6 and Printed by him at the Mouj Printing Bureau, Khatau Wadi, Bombay-4. *Proprietor :* A. D. Gorwala